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Anthropologies and geographies of globalization

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Abstract: Anthropologists and geographers are increasingly turning to one another for tools to analyze the present global political-economic conjuncture. Yet to date there has been no adequate accounting of the comparative advantages each field brings to studies of globalization – Anthropology with its emphasis on the role of culture in anchoring (or resisting) globalizing processes within particular societies and Geography with its more comparative emphasis on the politics of place and scale. This paper is intended to contribute to interdisciplinary exchange through such an accounting and argues for a constructive synthesis geared toward understanding how ‘local’ cultural systems articulate with political-economic currents operating at wider spatial scales.

Key words: globalization, anthropology, geography, culture, practice theory.

1 Introduction

Globalization is one of the few issues of our times that challenges the core identities of academic disciplines clear across the social, and indeed natural, sciences. Economists grapple with the growing contradictions between theories of economic ‘liberalization’ and mounting inequality and social unrest around the world; political scientists wonder whatever happened to the nation state as a viable political actor in its own right; and anthropologists rush to abandon characteristic ‘village studies’ in favor of more trendy explorations of ‘flows’, ‘border-crossings’ and ‘globalist projects’. The phenomenon of globalization threatens to rupture established boundaries *between* academic disciplines, as well as render irrelevant old modes of inquiry *within* them.

The widespread unease that globalization provokes within academia can also be attributed to its prominence in public discourse. Located historically at the close of the cold war and the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the idea of globalization has become, as Anna Tsing (2000) put it, ‘the definitional characteristic of an era’; it is wielded in the media and advertising, in corporate management and policy circles, in social

movements and campaigns for multiculturalism. Academics are called on to offer their expertise. Is globalization really anything new? Has it undermined the legitimacy of national governments? Will it destroy the planet? What is the best way to defend social justice against it? Yet in practice scholarship on globalization – at least outside the field of Economics – has rarely played a significant role in directly shaping its course.

In this paper I argue that Anthropology and Geography are two social science disciplines particularly well poised to grapple with these anxieties about globalization. While both fields have at times fallen prey to the allure of globalization, they have also produced some of its most trenchant critiques (e.g., Graeber, 2001; D. Mitchell, 2000). The critical capacity derives in large part from the fact that Anthropology and Geography stand out among the social sciences for avoiding the false separation of the 'economic' from the 'political', the 'social' and the 'cultural' that underpins the dominant neoliberal version of the globalization story. Rather, anthropologists and geographers are more inclined to explore the mutual embeddedness of these spheres, the processes through which they are socially constructed and the scope for change. Both fields as well have been particularly open to disciplinary self-reflexivity in relation to changing global conditions. The openness stems in part from long internal histories of negotiation across the physical and sociocultural divides that uniquely characterize both fields. It can also be attributed to solid traditions of critical self-reflection developed to cope with their mutual implication in histories of empire-building and colonization (e.g., Clifford, 1988; Gregory, 1994)

Given these similar trajectories, it is not surprising that anthropologists and geographers are increasingly turning to one another for tools to analyze the present conjuncture. The cross-fertilization can be witnessed in references to one another's publications in scholarly writing (e.g., Lawson, 1995; K. Mitchell, 2001; Tsing, 2000; Inda and Rosaldo, 2002), cross-disciplinary traffic at the major academic conferences, occasional publication by authors of one field in the major academic journals of the other (e.g., Escobar, 2001) and a few attempts to institutionalize collaborations (e.g., Center for Place, Culture and Politics established by geographer Neil Smith at the City University of New York). Such practices notwithstanding, disciplinary insularity prevails at the most crucial junctures of social reproduction: in administration, hiring and promotion decisions and norms guiding 'legitimate' research process, to name a few.

In light of these entrenched forms of institutional separation, this paper offers a systematic accounting of the comparative advantages each field brings to studies of globalization – Anthropology with its emphasis on the role of culture in anchoring (or resisting) globalizing processes within particular societies and Geography with its more comparative emphasis on the politics of place and scale. It presents the strengths and deficiencies of both and seeks out complementarities, by noting how the strengths of each can respond to the deficiencies of the other. It argues that a constructive (and self-conscious) synthesis offers a more compelling framework for studying globalization and, indeed, resisting its deleterious effects, than can be found within narrowly defined disciplinary boundaries. As an exercise in distilling 'core essences' of each field as it relates to globalization studies, the paper may strike some readers, especially those well-traveled across disciplinary divides, as overstating differences. The exercise is nonetheless important for specifying a rationale for extending cross-disciplinary fertilization beyond the domain of individual practice to the domain of institutional culture.

To others, the paper may appear to offer highly selective versions of Anthropology and Geography, born as it is out of my particular cross-disciplinary travel from undergraduate and graduate studies in an American Anthropology department to a faculty appointment in a Canadian Geography Department (where I was hired to teach Planning).¹ I could not possibly claim to represent here the totality of two disciplines so fraught with disagreement about what constitutes their core concerns. Rather, I have selected strains within each field that I consider to express its contribution to the study of globalization and that have the most to offer interdisciplinary engagement.

The paper begins with a clarification on the political, cultural and economic dimensions of globalization. It then considers contributions to the study of globalization deriving from practice theories in Anthropology on the one hand and the political economy of place and scale in Geography on the other. In the Gramscian tradition of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, anthropologists have argued that culture must be viewed not as a given set of relations and ideas structuring social life, but as something that is produced through human intention and action. The emphasis on agency offers several key analytical advantages to the study of local-global articulations which are duly explored here. In their attention to the fine-grained details of local agency, however, anthropological texts too often accord subordinate analytical status to the macroregulatory contexts for human agency. Here insights from Geography, which has pioneered in understanding place-making in relation to large-scale political-economic systems, prove useful. While they have had much to say about flows, spaces, states, even institutions, however, Geography as a whole has devoted less attention to the everyday lives of the people producing on-the-ground cultural systems through which macro processes are always interpreted and shaped. The paper concludes by arguing for a constructive synthesis geared toward understanding how 'local' cultural systems articulate with political-economic currents operating at wider spatial scales, as well as for a more politically engaged role for globalization research.

II Globalization: economic, political, cultural

Much of the anxiety surrounding the idea of globalization relates to the considerable ambiguity in the meanings and effects attributed to it. The economic dimension has received the widest airing, both within academia and beyond. There now exists widespread agreement that globalization entails 'a functional integration of internationally dispersed activities' that is qualitatively different from mere internationalization, involving 'the simple extension of economic activities across national boundaries' (Dicken, 1998: 5). While the globalization 'boosters' represent global economic integration as a natural and benign outcome of market processes, geographers and anthropologists have been at the forefront of documenting how economic globalization is moored to particular places by political and cultural means and how it is mediated by the actions of individuals and institutions at different scales. As economic geographers have argued, the economic restructuring required within nation states to accomplish economic globalization entails a political process – not 'deregulation' (as neoliberal discourse would have it) but *re*-regulation according to more strictly neoliberal principles (e.g., Amin and Thrift, 1997). The emphasis here on market rules governing globalization offers a more critical stance. It has, for instance, paved the way

for studies documenting an increasingly uneven distribution of goods and services where economic convergence has been most aggressively pursued (e.g., Christopherson, 1993) and the erosion of local social investments as market relations become increasingly disembedded from social life in locations on the 'periphery' of the capitalist world system (e.g. Steedly, 1993).²

Regulatory structures thus create an enabling political environment for global economic integration. Yet, in order to understand how ordinary people around the world come to adopt the production and consumption practices necessary to sustain economic globalization, a cultural analysis is required. How, for example, do Malay gender ideologies accommodate and resist a shift of women's productive labour from subsistence family farms to the shop floor of transnational garment corporations (Ong, 1987)? How do microfinance programs in Nepal cultivate the subjectivity of 'rational economic woman' to ensure high repayment rates (Rankin, 2001)? How could Canadian immigration policies favoring wealthy East Asian entrepreneurs ultimately generate the cultural reworkings in Vancouver, British Columbia, necessary to create political support for cuts in social services (K. Mitchell, 2001)? Here again the discursive regime of globalization as economic liberalization belies important areas of complexity. In the cultural domain, on-the-ground, local experiences and interpretations play a crucial role in sustaining – or challenging – large-scale political economic processes. It follows that globalization can only be accomplished within particular political and cultural parameters – and that it is incumbent on academic scholarship to elucidate the interconnections between these economic, political and cultural dimensions. The remainder of this paper is devoted to exploring the analytical insights offered by Anthropology and Geography, respectively, about these interconnections and how these insights might be joined to forge a nuanced and politically potent analysis of globalization so construed.

III Anthropology: the practice of culture

Among these dimensions, Anthropology contributes foremost a perspective on the local, cultural contexts for economic globalization. Within Anthropology, 'culture' itself has been construed in many different ways, and this paper draws particularly on an approach derived from theories of practice. In the age-old structure-agency debate, practice theory puts the emphasis on how the structure is produced, reproduced and transformed through human agency. An 'anthropology of practice' thus approaches culture through what people *do*, not, as more structural approaches would, through symbolic or economic calculations assigned to them.³ Before proceeding to elaborate how this approach to culture can contribute to studying globalization, let me first note that I am imposing a unity here upon a range of anthropological scholarship that converged in the 1970s and 1980s around a common interest in exploring the *processes* through which cultural systems are produced and how they change. At that time, words like 'practice', 'experience', 'performance' and 'action', as well as 'agents', 'actors', 'individuals' and 'subjects', began to dominate the anthropological lexicon – although considerable disagreement developed about which kinds of actions to privilege and how to view the agency-structure dialectic. Today, the significance of practice is all but taken for granted within most anthropological scholarship, but it is

important to recapture the moment of its emergence for the synthetic task at hand here.

The term 'practice anthropology' was first invoked by Sherry Ortner in a widely cited 1984 article on 'Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties'. The article claims that new experiments with practice theory in the 1980s offered a unifying force to an otherwise contested and heterogeneous discipline, and in particular she cites Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Marshall Sahlins (1981) for early attempts to demonstrate how practice constitutes cultural systems. The article acknowledges the Marxian legacy in practice theory – namely the emphasis on domination, asymmetry, inequality as core features of cultural systems – but also establishes distance from it, in particular with an injunction for anthropologists to attend to practices of sharing, reciprocity and cooperation as much as domination and resistance. Here I wish to recuperate the explicitly critical dimensions of practice theory, drawing on Bourdieu and Gramsci (who is scarcely mentioned in Ortner's 1984 article, or – perhaps even more mysteriously – in Bourdieu's *Outline of a theory of practice*), but also on Raymond Williams, whose *Marxism and literature* (1977) offers a highly influential interpretation of Gramsci for understanding the role of cultural practices in reproducing and transforming social systems. The strong materialist thrust in Williams (and implicit in Gramsci) finds expression in the cultural materialist tradition of anthropologist William Roseberry (and his students and colleagues like Gavin Smith and Susana Narotskzy), who sought to establish Anthropology as an eminently political and historical project that emphasizes the material as well as semantic semiological dimensions of culture. These latter strands of practice anthropology are brought together by anthropologists Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, who in *Of revelation and revolution* (1991) work out what Gramscian cultural politics might look like in the practice of ethnographic research, with due reference to Bourdieu and Williams. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 21–22) view culture as:

the semantic ground on which human beings seek to construct and represent themselves and others – and hence society and history. As this suggests, it is not merely a pot of messages, a repertoire of signs to be flashed across a neutral mental screen. It has form as well as content; is born in action as well as thought; is a product of human creativity as well as mimesis; and, above all, is empowered.

While culture has symbolic content deriving from the meanings people assign to the world and their actions in it, it is also dynamic – never fixed or given. Culture is not a preconstituted object, but must be created through human intention and action. As a form of production, culture has material as well as semantic dimensions, and cultural practices can work to reproduce or transform existing social structures.

The Gramscian legacy in this interpretation of culture is apparent through the focus it gives to politics and history. An anthropology of practice takes individuals' actions as its object of analysis, but only in relation to the material circumstances and dynamics of power within which they live. It strives, as did Gramsci from prison in Mussolini's Italy, to understand why people consent to oppressive rule and under what circumstances they resist. In exploring the relationship between consent and coercion, Gramsci recognized the role of culture in manufacturing consent – in permitting the exercise of control in the absence of violence. He discovered that it is in the domain of culture that economic and political 'persuasions' become inserted into the moral universe and get taken up by individuals as common sense (G. Smith, 1999: 241). People consent to rule when they accept as given (or at least desirable relative to perceived alternatives) the values, norms and versions of justice supporting the existing distribution of goods and

identifying the permissible range of dissent (D. Mitchell, 2000). They resist when they recognize the arbitrary foundations of rule. Individual practice thus expresses a tenuous relationship among consent, domination and resistance. The anthropologist's task is to understand the historical specificity of these relationships, to 'look at the combination of people's situated daily practices and their material history to see how agency and structure come together in specific cultural expressions' (G. Smith, 1999: 223).

Let me be clear that by contrasting 'structural' and 'practice' anthropology here I am not suggesting an exclusive either/or emphasis on structure versus practice. What are structures after all other than repetitive patterns of practice? The point is that an approach rooted in practice seeks to understand the process by which structures are created, while structuralists view their task as one of discerning structures from the flux of individual practices. Structuralist approaches to culture have certainly fallen out of fashion within Anthropology today, but their remnants can be found within a resurgent interest in 'culture' within theories of economic development, including some strains of economic geography. Thus it is worth noting here that the emphasis on agency and cultural production in practice anthropology offers three analytical advantages to the study of globalization: (1) it points to social differentiation even within apparently uniform cultures; (2) it emphasizes the role of consciousness and ideology in conditioning agency; (3) it enables anthropologists to view political-economic systems from the ground level. Let us take each of these points in turn.

1 Social differentiation

The emphasis in practice anthropology on how culture is produced through human intention and action raises questions foremost about *who* is doing the producing. In any given society, that is, some people have the capacity and authority to assert, or at least derive advantage from, the dominant values, norms and beliefs guiding social practice. For others, security of livelihood depends on accommodating (consciously or not) the ideologies, rituals, division of labor and forms of socialization through which those values seep into daily life. While acknowledging that all social actors seek to exercise control over their conditions of livelihood, practice theory begins with the premise that power is unevenly distributed (and that the symbols and meanings produced through practice are themselves empowered).

Two points follow from this discussion of social differentiation. First, practice theory rejects an interpretation of social identity as preconfigured by culture. Rather, it considers how social categories – women, low castes, priests, landlords – are themselves produced, reproduced, and transformed within particular historical conjunctures. In so doing, it highlights the dialectical relationship between the material circumstances and shared meanings animating individual practice and constituting social categories. In the South Asian context, a person may be 'low caste' in the context of traditional patronage relations, but upon earning a cash income and accumulating 'modern' consumer goods the same person may identify (and ultimately become identified) as 'middle class'. As they enter into wage relations outside their neighborhoods, that is, low castes loosen the patronage bonds assigned at birth, thus transforming the meaning of their caste identity and the local landscape of power (Rankin, 2003).

Second, practice theorists also reject the functionalist notion that the *objective* of a society as expressed in cultural traditions is to reproduce itself, in favor of an analysis of how social differentiation introduces the possibility of dissent and conflict between groups – the outcome of which may be radical change or the construction of alternative epistemological frames within an existing repertoire of symbols and meanings (Narotzky, 1997: 177). The emphasis on social differentiation, that is, foregrounds the social struggle in culture and introduces the possibility of rupture.

It is important to note that practice anthropologists have generally relied on theories of interest that are distinctly different from those underpinning economic liberalism. The latter begins resolutely with the individual as the unit of analysis. It builds a theory of markets as the benign arbiter of justice, rooted in the idea that rational profit-maximizing individuals freely pursuing their own self-interest will generate the maximum public good. This position conveniently removes structure from the picture altogether (and erases politics and history from the domain of 'the economy'). While it is tempting to read a narrow interpretation of practice as (individual) economizing activity into Bourdieu (Crang, 1997; Fine, 2001; Sayer, 1999) – this conflation should be resisted. For the focus in Bourdieu is rather on the collective efforts of socially differentiated individual practice in constituting social class. To arrive at a clear understanding of the relationship between practice and class interest, it is necessary now to turn to the concepts of hegemony, ideology and consciousness.

2 Hegemony, ideology and consciousness

The Gramscian concepts of hegemony, ideology and consciousness have furnished anthropologists with important – though admittedly contested – tools for understanding how power operates through culture. When power is hegemonic, Gramsci argued, those in subordinate positions experience the order that oppresses them as self-evident and natural.⁴ In such cases (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: 22):

... power ... hides itself in forms of everyday life. Sometimes ascribed to transcendental, suprahistorical forces (gods or ancestors, nature or physics, biological instinct or probability), these forms are not easily questioned. Being 'natural' or 'ineffable', they seem to be beyond human agency, notwithstanding the fact that the interests they serve may be all too human.

Thus hegemony is a form of power, which, though never entirely homologous with culture, reflects that part of the dominant world-view that has come to be taken for granted as the established way of things (Williams, 1977: 110). Neoliberalism can thus be said to be hegemonic to the extent that it not only expresses dominant capitalist interests but also is accepted as normal reality, or common sense, even by those who are hardest hit by 'deregulation', fiscal austerity and workfare.

If Gramsci recognized culture as a domain of coercion – and indeed of revolution – then Bourdieu contributed analytical tools that could yield empirically detailed accounts of how hegemonic power gets enacted in minute ways through the mundane routines of everyday life (see also Eagleton, 1991: 156–58). The condition in which there is a correspondence between objective order and subjective experience Bourdieu calls '*doxa*' – a realm of social life within which '*what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying: ... tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition ...*' (1977: 167; emphasis in original). For Bourdieu, *doxa* presents a paradox that must be

documented carefully through scientific ethnographic research – and that must ultimately become the domain of resistance. In *Masculine domination* (2001: 1–2) he writes:

I have always been astonished by what might be called the *paradox of doxa*: . . . that the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices, ultimately perpetuates itself so easily, apart from a few historical accidents, and that the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural. And I have also seen masculine domination, and the way it is imposed and suffered, as the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I call symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling.

For that part of culture in which hegemony prevails, individuals assume dispositions and orientations beyond their own horizon of meaning – ‘habitus’ in Bourdieu’s lexicon – and thus collude, often unwittingly, in the production of a system that may oppress them. In these circumstances, the practices of individuals, right down to their bodily comportment, can acquire a unity and consistency without being the result of conscious obedience to rules. Thus anthropologists have documented the processes by which abstract ideologies circulating at a global scale – neoliberalism, political democracy, development, modernization – assume historically and culturally specific textures and become rooted as common sense in particular societies (Pigg, 1992; 2001; Li, 1999; Tsing, 1993). For Bourdieu, the documentation always entailed a civic mission – to expose the cognitive structures underlying the wide-ranging (though always related) forms of oppression, from neoliberal globalization to male domination.

Of course, the possibility for culture to bind people to political programs is limited. There is always the possibility that people will begin to see the arbitrary foundations of the established order, to recognize it as a human construction. When this happens, as Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 8) put it, ‘the contradictions between the world as represented and the world as experienced [will] become ever more palpable, ever more insupportable’ – a dissonance which Gramsci identified as ‘contradictory consciousness’ (a fecund state for critical consciousness) and Bourdieu as ‘political consciousness’. Feminist anthropologists have long documented the complex relationships among ‘doxa’, ‘habitus’ and ‘political consciousness’ – rejecting the linear formulations in Bourdieu and Gramsci and revealing a far more complex and self-conscious politics of consent (see Moore, 1988, and Kabeer, 1994, for summaries and Kandyoti, 1991, and Ong, 1987, for examples). The key point for our purpose here is to acknowledge the potential for contradictory forms of consciousness to catalyze politically more potent and collective forms of reflection on structural patterns of oppression.

Once hegemony is recognized, however, ‘once its internal contradictions revealed, when what seemed natural comes to be negotiable, when the ineffable is put into words, then hegemony becomes something other than itself. It turns into ideology . . .’ (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: 23–24). Within the domain of ideology, domination requires self-conscious cultural work, the assertion of control over the various modes of cultural production.⁵ Thus while (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992: 29; cited in G. Smith, 1999: 242):

[h]egemony consists of constructs and conventional practices that have come to permeate a political community[,] ideology originates in the assertion of a particular social group. Hegemony is beyond argument; ideology is more likely to be perceived as a matter of inimical opinion and interest and hence is more open to contestation. Hegemony, at its most effective, is mute; ideology invites argument.

The dominant ideology of any historical moment or spatial location – Bourdieu's 'orthodoxy' – will of course reflect the orientations of the dominant social group(s), 'although it may be widely peddled beyond' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: 24). To the extent that subordinate populations view their interests collectively and attempt to assert themselves against a dominant order, they may also have ideologies – their own explicit and *articulated* world-view – through which they critique the established orthodoxy and attempt to control the cultural terms in which the world is ordered.

Gramscian interpretations of culture are not, of course, the exclusive domain of anthropologists. Cultural geographers, too, have recently taken an interest in the politics of culture in an effort to shed light on the politically regressive context of geographic scholarship since the rise of the Thatcher-Reagan neoliberal hegemony (e.g., Lee and Wills, 1997). In so doing, they have rejected their own functionalist roots as a subdiscipline concerned with chronicling the uniqueness of peoples and places through artifacts, landscapes and other material dimensions of culture. The 'new cultural geography' turned not to Anthropology but to Cultural Studies – also steeped in various appropriations of Gramsci – for an analysis of power, and specifically for understanding how such regressive ideologies could become the common sense of electoral majorities in advanced industrialized countries (P. Jackson, 1989; D. Mitchell, 2000).

This contribution notwithstanding, the 'new cultural geographers' have resembled their Cultural Studies counterparts in three significant respects which diminish their effectiveness for understanding culturally variable experiences of globalization. First, they commonly take as the subject of their analysis the media, fashion, the education system and other components of the 'critical infrastructure' performing the cultural work of making and marking distinction (D. Mitchell, 2000; Dwyer and Crang, 2002; Zukin, 1991; 1995). In so doing, they generate data that, if not specifically textual, entails at least some form of public discourse – a screenplay, messages about beauty embedded in the Spring runway fashions, the high school curriculum. These discourses certainly travel the globe, but in themselves they do not tell us anything about how they are experienced by people in different social locations. Second, Cultural Geography, like Cultural Studies, has tended to concentrate on the macro scales of cultural production – such as how suburban landscapes codify gender beliefs (McDowell, 1983; Mackenzie and Rose, 1983), or how apartheid and racism operate as geographical systems (P. Jackson, 1992; D. Mitchell, 2000). With some notable exceptions (e.g. Peake and Trotz, 1999; Ruddick, 1996; Stiell and England, 1997), cultural geographers have less experience with reading narratives and practices of individuals 'on the ground' within communities as themselves providing 'texts' with messages to impart. Finally, both Cultural Geography and Cultural Studies tend to concentrate on the North American and European contexts for globalization.

3 Ground-level view of political-economic systems

Anthropologists, by contrast, generally examine the dialectics of ideology and consciousness at a finer grain, concentrating as they do on how culture is produced and resisted within civil society. Their data often consists in the minutiae of what people say

and do in their everyday lives, notwithstanding the interventions of a 'reflexive turn' promoted by post-modern social theory and concerned foremost with the politics of representation (Clifford, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994). Methodologically, that is, anthropologists generally rely on ethnography, entailing not just interviewing, mapping and other conventional qualitative research methods, but also, characteristically, participant observation – long-term residence in the research community during which the ethnographer observes people in their own time and space and, to the extent possible, participates in community events and daily life activities. As Michael Burawoy *et al.* (1991) have argued, participant observation makes possible a hermeneutic dimension of social science research; it enables the investigator to juxtapose claims against practice, assess how people interpret events that are observed, and account for how the presence of the researcher influences the research context. It also enables the investigator to build rapport with people in the community, which can facilitate and deepen the interview process beyond the conventional isolated 1–2-hour interview transpiring between strangers (see also Clifford, 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1989; B. Jackson, 1987).

Anthropologists have, moreover, characteristically concentrated their research on peripheral areas, or (increasingly) the participation of formerly 'peripheral' peoples and cultures in border-crossings and flows. The commitment to cross-cultural research, of course, has significant regressive origins in the colonial enterprise ('knowing' the natives as a necessary condition to subjugating them), and has come under assault as a form of neocolonialism (Escobar, 1995; Visweswaran, 1994), prompting, it must be added, calls to 'exoticize the West' and deconstruct the classic ethnographic texts.⁶ But it also has a politically progressive legacy. Particularly in the American tradition established by Franz Boas and taken up most explicitly by his students Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead in the 1930s and 1940s, Anthropology construed itself as offering a critique to scientific racism, economic rationalism and other dimensions of 'Western culture'. The idea was to expand knowledge (specifically institutionalized knowledge in the west) about the possible ways of organizing economic and social life, in order to challenge American middle class sociocultural assumptions. In the wake of the world wars, the comparative efforts of anthropologists were framed specifically in terms of understanding difference for the sake of diffusing what Mike Davis has called 'the ecology of fear' on a global scale; Anthropology could play a role in making the world safe for difference, by encouraging people to suspend judgment of cultural 'others' until their differences could be made sense of.⁷

In a practice-theory framework, then, these methods and scalar priorities generate empirically detailed accounts of ideology as everyday life – of the cultural work entailed in enforcing and legitimating established norms and values, in routine daily experience as much as in public rituals like marriages or Independence Day celebrations. An Anthropology of practice considers how these forms of cultural production can assume hegemonic proportions and achieve a strong grip on people's common sense by detailing their 'habitus' – their practical modes of consent and collusion. Most significantly, it explores the contradictions of prevailing ideologies, how those contradictions touch the consciousness of social actors, and under what circumstances individuals collectively articulate a critique of culture and attempt to transform it. Within this kind of ethnography, learning to read the modes of representation that convey contradictory consciousness – the personal testimonies, ambivalent expressions,

utopian narratives – becomes the primary methodological act (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991: 30).

The emphasis in 'practice anthropology' on fine-grained ethnographic accounts of everyday life highlights how wider-scale political-economic relations are experienced in local contexts. This commitment is important within scholarship on globalization, which typically operates at more macro scales of analysis. With respect to the periphery in particular, practice theory offers the analytical tools for understanding *how* change transpires, without falling prey to simplistic models of 'global culture' encompassing 'local places' within a single ideological system (Tsing, 2000). Anti-globalization social movements have mobilized such discourses of cultural imperialism to protest the imposition of western culture around the world (Tomlinson, 1999), and the structuralist understanding of culture upon which such accounts are based continues to inform academic critiques of globalization, even if stark theories of cultural homogenization have fallen out of favor (see Kelly, 1999, for a review of this literature). The emphasis on agency, on the contrary, highlights how local social and cultural filters interpret and in turn give shape to what is coming in from the outside. Without losing sight of the broader macroeconomic currents of power, that is, practice theory opens up analytical space not just to explore how local societies change as they are increasingly integrated into the global capitalist system, but also to view global processes *as* local processes, as embedded within communities, neighborhoods and households. The question then becomes, how do globalizing processes facilitate or hinder counter-hegemonic social change in particular locations? To the extent that old hegemonic forms of power unravel, how do cultural claims – to history, tradition, justice – get fought out in the domain of ideology, and what are the material conditions of that struggle?

Several possibilities arise from this disciplinary stance. 'Taking local perspectives' can offer novel interpretations of universal phenomena, as Anna Tsing (1993) demonstrates in an ethnography exploring 'primitive' (Dayak) perspectives on urban civilization and Indonesia's place in the global political-economic system. It also allows for ethnography to reveal different kinds of globalizing processes – globalization not just as a transnational force dismantling state authority (Rouse, 1995, cited in Tsing, 2000), but also as networking among feminist activists to secure lines of state-society accountability (Riles, 1998, cited in Tsing, 2000; see also Burawoy *et al.*, 1991, on the advantages of multisited ethnography). Descriptions of subtle changes in one place can provide a new window on globalizing processes, which, as Stacy Pigg's work has pioneered in exploring, may not only refute conventional formulations that the global system universally determines local processes, but also uncover grounded, contextualized interpretations of justice as a foundation for progressive social change (Pigg, 2001).

4 The limits to practice

For the most part, however, cultural anthropologists do not explicitly develop the normative dimension in practice theory to engage directly with policy, or even the epistemological frameworks for policy-making. With some notable exceptions (e.g., Burawoy *et al.*, 1991; G. Smith, 1989; Roseberry, 1989), still less do they venture to articulate explicit critiques of the cultures they visit – a reticence which is particularly inconsistent with theories of practice designed to facilitate social critique. Rather,

anthropological writing generally confines itself to the domain of description – to ‘reduc[ing] the puzzlement and clarify[ing] what goes on’ in another place heard from (Geertz, 1973: 16, 23). To the extent that anthropologists have engaged practice theory in a critique of culture, the effort has concentrated on the intransigencies of colonialism and on generating critical questions from ethnographic research to probe the ethnographer’s own culture (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991; Dirks, 2001; Marcus and Fischer, 1986) – rather than on subjecting the cultural politics of ‘the other’ to critical scrutiny.

The motivation for these textual and substantive priorities resides, as we have seen, at least in part with a progressive sentiment, namely the wish to assert the equality of cultures and root out discrimination stemming from ignorance. The penchant for political neutrality *vis-à-vis* other cultures also no doubt derives from the positivist standards of objectivity that have historically infused even the most humanist branches of the social sciences with prescriptions to detach morality and political interest from properly scholarly research. There is also a personal politics that must be noted here. For ethnographic research hinges crucially on the generosity, assistance and friendship of the anthropologist’s hosts. Explicit social critique of the cultures in which those hosts are embedded could cause offense, if not personal harm – especially given the power differentials that typically characterize anthropologists’ relationships with their hosts.

Thus most anthropological writing has not taken the ‘practice’ in practice theory to its logical conclusion – to the domain of ‘praxis’ encompassing research itself as a form of practice. Here there is firmer ground for political engagement. First comes the recognition that in the absence of guiding standards of justice against which to judge culture (others’ as much as one’s own), much of anthropology in fact suffers from a kind of relativism that could contribute to perpetuating the hegemonic and ideological forms of power it is so well poised to describe. ‘If all cultures are in principle equally valuable . . .,’ as Perry Anderson (1992: 54–55) famously asked, ‘why fight for a better one?’ A second layer of engaging research as praxis, then, could involve using the tools of practice theory not merely to document the dialectics of domination and resistance, but also to empower those participating as informants in ethnographic research to view their world critically and to mobilize those critical capacities as resources for progressive social change.

Another pitfall of anthropological approaches to globalization follows: in its own practice, Anthropology often gives subordinate status to the macroregulatory contexts for human agency. The ‘long-term, mainly qualitative, highly participative, and almost obsessively fine-combed field-study’ (Geertz, 1973: 23), that is, pays microscopic attention to local cultural topographies at the expense of situating local maps of meaning on larger maps of global changes. The strength of recent transcultural studies focusing on cultural flows and border crossings lies in documenting the diversity of globalization through the specific ‘conjunctures’ of movement and travel (Clifford, 1988; Gupta and Ferguson, 2002; Inda and Rosaldo, 2002). As Tsing (2000: 10) argues, however, ‘the possibility that capitalisms and governmentalities are themselves situated, contradictory, effervescent or culturally circumscribed is much less explored’. Simply posing the local-global dichotomy obscures the multiple scales through which economic, political and cultural forms of globalization are mediated.

IV Geographies of globalization

Geography offers some remedies to these limitations in the study of globalization, while at the same time suffering from its own weaknesses which require anthropological perspectives for their redress. Geographers share the fundamental premise that all life is 'placed'; in 'situating' social and economic processes, geographers approach space not as a neutral or fixed container of human activity, but rather as playing a structuring role in those processes. The emphasis on space lends Geography a comparative tendency, useful for placing local processes in macroeconomic perspective. Geography can thus offer a spatial dimension to Gramscian interpretations of cultural politics; it offers a much-needed 'geometry of power', to borrow Doreen Massey's now widely cited interpretation of space as an arena through which social relations of empowerment and disempowerment, domination and subordination, participation and exclusion, operate and continually transform social and physical nature (Massey, 1992).

Much of the work on globalization in Geography takes place within the subfield of Economic Geography, which views its task primarily in terms of documenting the spatial factors of capitalist accumulation and economic growth. Increasingly, however, the lines between Economic and Cultural Geography have blurred as economic geographers have explored the social and institutional dimensions of production, consumption, value and exchange (e.g., Lee and Wills, 1997), and cultural geographers have considered the economies of cultures (e.g., P. Jackson, 2002a). As Richa Nagar *et al.* (2002) have recently pointed out, feminist geographers have pioneered in analyzing macroscale political economic processes in relation to the social identities of women and others in subordinate social positions. The objective here in exploring geographical contributions and limitations to the study of globalization is thus to review approaches in Economic, Cultural and Feminist Geography. I note three spheres of comparative advantage: the insights offered by making (1) 'place' and (2) 'scale' a central category of analysis and (3) the explicit normative position vis-à-vis neoliberalism and economic governance.

1 Everything in its place

Anthropologists have meticulously studied *in* diverse and faraway places, yet until very recently they have largely overlooked the significance of place itself in the production and reproduction of social life (for some notable exceptions, see Pigg, 1992; Rodman, 1992; Low, 2001). For all its explorations of cultural *difference*, that is, the tendency in Anthropology has, remarkably, been to assume an isomorphism between place and culture (Gupta and Ferguson, 2002; Inda and Rosaldo, 2002). It has rather been the task of geographers to document 'the difference that space makes' (Sayer, 1985): to argue that cultures and economies are not bounded entities occupying specific territories but are themselves constituted through spatial structures and that 'there are spatial as well as social divisions of labour' (P. Jackson, 2002c). Accordingly, in Geography, 'place' moves from a derivative position to playing a formative role in social and economic processes; as geographer Michael Watts argues, 'how things develop depends on *where* they develop, on what has been historically sedimented

there, on the social and spatial structures that are already in place' (Pred and Watts, 1992: 11; emphasis in original).

Feminist geographers have been particularly persuasive in documenting that space, as a constitutive element of culture, is socially constructed, filled with power, struggled over (e.g., Jones *et al.*, 1997; Massey, 1999). Their work shows how gender ideology entails spatial practices and how the social construction of space produces and maintains power relations. Take, for example, the design of many a public lectern on the stage of a university auditorium. How often do women speakers alight the podium to confront a structure that nearly obscures them from the view of the audience (or a microphone placed to suit the stature of a generic six-foot professor)? Such spatial configurations carry unequivocal messages about the gendering of authority in professional settings. Feminist geographers have thus examined the physical construction of the built environment (Robson, 2000); the social and economic paths women trace in places (Massey, 1994); the dialectical relationship between space and identity (Peake and Trotz, 1999) and how women in different localities combine different forms of work, as well as the implications of work for women's location in space (McDowell, 2000). Implicit in these studies of how gendered power relations are produced through, and in turn transform, space is a tactical understanding of the role of space in challenging and transforming dominant cultural ideologies.

Economic geographers, especially those driving the 'cultural turn' in the subdiscipline, have focused more on the institutional dimensions of place – firms, markets, intermediary organizations like universities, civil society organizations, and the institutions like national states that provide the regulatory framework for formal-sector economic activity. Drawing on the 'new institutional sociology' and 'evolutionary economics', research on regions has, for example, paid increasing attention to the social factors underpinning competitiveness – to the 'enduring significance of place-bound institutional and cultural assets' (Amin and Thrift, 1997: 155). Thus Michael Storper (1995) has introduced the notion of regions as loci for 'untraded interdependencies' – unpriced technological spillovers such as common labor markets and 'conventions' for learning and interpreting knowledge – that flow in the form of technological skills from one activity to another in the spatial context of the region. These interdependencies are place-specific and serve as the basis for regional differentiation (Maskell and Malmberg, 1999; Storper, 1995). Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (e.g., 1997) have similarly argued that regional competitiveness depends on adequate degrees of 'institutional thickness' – a combination of dense and diverse institutional activity, high levels of institutional interaction, shared cultural norms and values, and common industrial purpose – that enhances learning, innovation and profitability by embedding institutions in their regional social context. Here again, sociospatial practices and social relations rooted in particular places assume central importance in assessing regional economic competitiveness (see also Cox, 1997; Gertler, 1995; Saxenian, 1998).

Two points follow from this discussion about the significance of place in the specific context of economic globalization: (1) global economic integration notwithstanding, place still plays a determining role in economic and social life; (2) place must always, however, be viewed in dialectical relationship with global economic and cultural processes. With regard to the first point, some geographers have taken their cue from globalization boosters declaring the 'end of history' and the 'dawn of a borderless world' (Fukuyama, 1992; Ohmae, 1990) to argue that the rise of information technology

and global financial integration has signaled the 'end of geography', the 'demise of the state' (O'Brien, 1992) and rendered industries 'footloose', no longer bound to place (Storper and Walker, 1989). A more subtle version of the globalization thesis argues that the national state remains politically significant as a site of struggle and arbiter of democratic accountability, but its capacity to wield power within its own national borders has been 'hollowed out' in the shift to internationalized production systems (Jessop, 1994). Thus a 'space of flows' – global networks of production processes within and between firms – is said to be replacing a 'space of places' – territorially based national economies (Castells, 1996; Dicken, 1998). On the cultural side, too, a new subset of geographic research has similarly subordinated the conventional focus on place contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity to privilege 'transnational cultural flows' as a determining force in local social life (Crang, 1997; K. Mitchell, 1998).

Feminist and institutionalist perspectives discussed above contest the 'false' dualism of mobility versus fixity in boosterist theories of globalization and argue that 'place still matters' even in the flux of global economic and cultural flows. Institutionalists have emphasized how divergent national regulatory structures (Boyer, 1996; Jessop, 1990; 1994; Peck and Tickell, 1994), market rules (Christopherson, 1993), national systems of innovation (Lundvall, 1992), regional institutional configurations (Storper, 1995; Saxenian, 1998), and the territorial embeddedness of firms (Cox, 1997) continue to construct geographically unique forms of capitalism. They suggest that even with opportunities for 'footloose' organization of production on a global scale, practices of agglomeration, networking, knowledge-sharing and social learning within place reveal that sociospatial embeddedness remains important for firms' profitability (Amin and Thrift, 1997; Gertler, 1995). Feminist geographers have concentrated at more micro scales to assert the enduring significance of place. They have argued that globalization theories overlook the economic, political, and cultural practices taking place within households and communities (Nagar *et al.*, 2002: 4; emphasis in original):

... in daily activities of caring, consumption, and religion, and networks of alternative politics where women's contribution to globalization are often located. We see these informal sites for understanding globalization processes in their own right because ... it is precisely these spheres and activities that underwrite and actively constitute the public spheres of globalization.

Thus, feminist geographers have shown how economic globalization has been constituted (and subsidized) locally – through gendered labor practices within households and communities (e.g., Lawson, 1999), through relations between formal and informal economies and between high-skill and low-skill work (Sassen, 1998), and through gendered politics of inequality, difference and resistance in specific communities (Nagar, 2000).

The second contribution of feminist and institutionalist economic geographers in relation to the study of globalization has to do with their relational approach to (local) fixities and (global) flows. In their emphasis on the institutional and regulatory specificities of capitalist development, economic geographers favor an understanding of the local in dialectical relationship with wider fields of influence and action (Amin and Thrift, 1997). Thus, for example, Erik Swyngedouw offers the 1995 collapse of the Barings Bank, in the wake of the speculative activities of a Singapore-based trader, as an instance in which 'local actions shape global money flows, while global processes, in

turn, affect local actions' (1997: 137). Michael Watts engages the notion of 'dialectical tacking' to examine core-periphery relations (in Pred and Watts, 1992). He illustrates how in West Africa agro-industrialization associated with macroeconomic restructuring transforms peasant production systems, resulting in a reworking of modernity itself, as a changing culture of work intensifies struggles within households and communities. Such cases studies suggest that:

... a sensitive analysis does not argue for [global] against [local] but focuses on the relations. Local communities may be buffeted by global forces but they are not helpless victims with no coping strategies. However, neither can they be autonomous of the world they inhabit, so that their strategies will invariably involve consequences beyond their direct control. In this case, geographers deal with a local-global dialectic, where local events constitute global structures which then impinge on local events in an iterative continuum. (Taylor, Watts and Johnston, 1995: 9)

Pred and Watts (1992), Cindi Katz (2001) and Nagar *et al.* (2002) describe this kind of geographic research as 'topographical' insofar as it approaches 'place' not as a unique or self-contained space but rather as an entry point for developing a relational approach to globalization that situates places in their broader context and in relation to other geographic scales.

2 The politics of scale

The latter notion of scale was 'discovered' by geographers seeking to add a finer-grained analysis to a relational understanding of space in the context of economic globalization. These days no doctoral comprehensive exam or dissertation proposal in human geography passes muster without ample reference to the 'politics of scale', now viewed as a disciplinary trademark (to the point that its meaning sometimes becomes diluted beyond recognition). In my view, the novelty and analytical force of scale has been overstated, since geographers treat scale much as they do place and space – as a relational and socially constructed dimension of human life that bears on the distribution of resources and opportunity. In spite of the dizzying rate (and occasional cross-purpose) at which 'scale' is summoned in the contemporary geographic literature, it is nonetheless useful to distill here its contribution for a 'topographical' approach to globalization that wishes to trace how places become interconnected through processes of globalization.

'Scale' first acquired its broad currency through the promotional efforts of Erik Swyngedouw, who (building on the tradition of 'locality studies'; Massey, 1994) argues that conventional bipolar perspectives relating 'the local' to 'the global' are too narrow and overlook the multiple, intersecting scales through which everyday life is constituted (for a summary of this argument, see Kelly, 1999, and Swyngedouw, 1997). The conventional view of scale consigns certain activities to particular levels of hierarchically embedded physical spaces – social networks to the local level, for example, or surfing the web to the global level. By this logic, the anthropologist studying social networks would focus her gaze exclusively at the local scale. Swyngedouw argued that this formulation of scale as a container for action is too simple and that activities transpiring at one scale must be viewed in relation to other scales of influence: '[t]he scaling of everyday life', for example, 'is expressed in bodily, community, urban, regional, national, supranational and global configurations' (1997: 144).

Feminist geographers have thus identified the body as a key site for understanding the gender politics of globalization insofar as it serves as a 'cultural battleground' (NACLA, 2001: 12; cited in Nagar *et al.*, 2002) on which such issues as reproductive rights, the commodification of sexuality and the gendered construction of workers are negotiated and struggled over (Nagar *et al.*, 2002; Nagar, 2000). At the local scale, they have traced how men's and women's engagement with global capitalisms, mediated by state economic restructuring, transforms or entrenches gender relations and identities within the household and community (e.g., Peake and Trotz, 1999). Institutionalists have explored how other forms of economic and social foundations of global competitiveness – untraded interdependencies, social learning, institutional thickness – operate at regional as much as national scales. Urban Geographers have argued that the distribution of resources and processes of change can only be understood if cities are recognized as nodes within 'dense interscalar networks' (Brenner, 2000).

Not only must scale (like place) be viewed relationally, but it must also be recognized as a socially produced and politically contested category of analysis. In other words, scale is not ontologically given or a politically neutral discursive strategy; rather it embodies and expresses relations of power (Swyngedouw, 1997a: 140). Thus Swyngedouw (1997) notes how analysts might evoke competing 'scalar narratives' when representing particular public events. The Barings Bank collapse, for example, could be attributed to an individual male body (rogue trader), inadequate national regulatory regimes (Singapore and England), the global derivatives market or the absence of supranational financial oversight (by an EU central bank) – depending on the positionality and political agenda of the analyst. A constructivist approach to scale becomes increasingly apposite as the globe becomes ever more interconnected and 'dynamics at one scale are increasingly implicated at other scales' (Kelly, 1999: 381). Such an approach allows geographers to recognize that in the context of neoliberal capitalism, the scale of regulation has shifted from the conventional, democratically accountable scale of the nation state upwards to the undemocratic supranational scale and downwards to the (relatively) politically impotent scale of community and neighborhood. As regulation 'jumps scale' in this way (N. Smith, 1993), the political point for geographers is to assess who gains and who loses, as well as to identify key 'scalar strategies' for resistance.

3 Accountability and normative position

When compared to Anthropology, the tendency in Geography has been toward more explicit discussion about the normative implications of research. Having established that place and scale are socially constructed, for example, it becomes possible, indeed imperative, to take issue with the easy conflation of neoliberalism and globalization (Kelly, 1999: 380). Geographers have thus sought to claim the global scale as a site for politically progressive projects – systems of global governance and new social movements that constitute a global civil society within which are forged collective strategies out of enduring local particularisms (e.g., Herod, 1997; Peck and Tickell, 1994). 'To ignore the global scale in progressive practice', writes Kelly (1999: 386), 'would be to defer to the orthodox ways in which it is represented and the neoliberal policy conclusions that are drawn'.

In addition to arguing that reconfiguration of scale can either challenge or reproduce existing power relations, so too geographers have noted that 'scale capabilities' – abilities to exercise power and influence across particular spatial scales – vary by social position along class, gender, ethnic and other lines (Swyngedouw, 1997: 142). Since strategies for social change must always have a spatial dimension (see Peake and Trotz, 1999), politically, the task is to enhance the scale capabilities of those in subordinate social locations. Feminist geographers have argued that the injustices of globalization are not limited to the hegemony of neoliberalism, but also include imperialist, racist and sexist dimensions that must be confronted in a 'geography-crossing and scale-jumping political response' (Katz, 2001: 1216). Their work has shown how neocolonial power relations and political economic structures combine with religious and other cultural ideologies to produce new racialized and class-based sexual and labor practices (Katz, 2001; Pratt, 1999; Nagar, 2000). Within a feminist cultural politics, then, recognizing place and identity 'as embedded and intimately related through globalization processes can lay the grounds for building a gendered oppositional politics that moves across space and scale' (Nagar *et al.*, 2002: 16).

Within geography different strategies have thus emerged to counter the deleterious effects of globalization. Notwithstanding these differences, much of Human Geography shares a fundamental normative thrust in the oppositional politics it wishes to construct vis-à-vis globalization. The normative commitment is related to the direct commentary on economic development policy that geographers – even those with explicitly oppositional politics – are occasionally called upon to offer, through professional consultancies for governments and regulatory bodies at supranational, national, regional and local scales. Thus, geographers have advised national governments about global patterns of technological development (Britton, 1978; Steed, 1982) and about the significance of cities for regional systems of innovation (Wolfe and Gertler, 1998), and municipal governments about the relationship between economic stability and a positive environment of diversity (Gibson *et al.*, 1999; Florida, 2002; see also Sandercock, 1998). Danny Dorling and Mary Shaw (2002) have recently argued in these pages that Geographers do not contribute *enough* to public policy. The point to emphasize here, however, is that the responsibility for policy engagement implicit in the study of spatial and scalar dimensions of globalization holds geographers accountable to the constituencies they claim to represent in a way that is less apparent for ethnographic studies of isolated, out-of-the-way places. Relative to Anthropology, the comparative perspectives offered through a relational view of place and scale provide a foundation for taking a firm normative stand – not only documenting the sociospatial costs of economic globalization, but also taking a stand about what is to be done.

4 The limits to geography

The relational view of place and scale represents an important theoretical contribution, but it is more difficult to reflect this commitment in the *practice* of conducting empirical research. Qualitative research in particular must transpire *in* a place and, as Nagar *et al.* (2002) have argued, the contingencies (and politics) of the research process have tended to favor a focus on certain places, scales, sectors and actors in the global economy. The feminist contribution notwithstanding, geographers have tended to concentrate their

analysis at more macro scales, to focus on the formal sector (governments, markets and formal institutions), and to consider primarily certain kinds of networks – regulated international trade, investment flows, economic integration). The emphasis has generally been on the political economy of globalization, rather than socially differentiated experiences and responses or the role of households, communities, individual subjectivities and the informal sector in rooting economic globalization at the local scale (see also Pred and Watts, 1992).⁸ To the extent that geographers have considered the local scale, they have largely concentrated on exploring how the phenomena in question – firm behaviour, labor markets, cultural economies and so on – have been ‘touched’ or ‘influenced’ by economic globalization (see also Gibson-Graham, 1996; Roberts, 2003); framing the local-global relation in terms of impacts tends to ‘reinscribe the centrality of corporations, markets, financial and development institutions even as these are critiqued’ for their deleterious effects (Nagar *et al.*, 2002: 4).

Economic geographers have deepened the conventional analysis of formal-sector institutions by exploring the role of social networks and trust in fostering ‘social learning’ and ‘systems of innovation’. Yet we miss a clear understanding of how people in informal sectors, households and communities, as well as in economies of the periphery, have subsidized economic globalization – absorbing the social costs of privatized public services, deregulated markets and social welfare cuts. Nor do we get a sense of who pays and who benefits when ‘social learning’ and ‘institutional thickness’ are achieved; what, for example, are the gendered, racialized and class dimensions of these indicators of economic success? Some economic geographers embarking on the ‘cultural turn’ have tended to reify culture in seeking isolable, even replicable, cultural determinants of economic growth (e.g., Piore and Sabel, 1984).

Taking important cues from feminist theories of identity, Cultural Geography has been the subfield making the most concerted attempts to represent local agency, especially vis-à-vis processes of commodification (e.g., Jackson, 2002b; Dwyer and Crang, 2002). The commitment here has been to capturing the pleasure, desire and creativity in the production and consumption of commodities, rather than merely mapping the impacts of social exclusion. Cultural geographers have, moreover, been skeptical of tendencies toward the reification of culture in other subdisciplines, to the extent even of debating whether culture can be assigned an ontological status at all. The debate has been fuelled by the provocations of Don Mitchell, who argues that in fact culture is politics by another name (D. Mitchell, 2000: 77; emphasis in original):

... cultural geographers should be engaged in the task of determining not what culture is – since it is nothing – but rather how the *idea* of culture works in society. To call culture a level or domain makes little sense. Culture is instead a powerful name – powerful because it obscures what it is meant to identify. If ‘culture’ is politics by another name (as it is), then it is so by dint of its function as *ideology*.

The proposal here is to attend instead to how the ‘idea of culture’ (like the idea of scale) gets deployed as a means of defining what and who is legitimate in society, in the service of ‘culture wars’ such as the ethno-religious nationalisms raging in parts of Asia and the Middle East. The problem is that, in so conflating culture with ideology, this approach overlooks other forms of cultural production and the potential for critical resistance they pose.

We thus return again to the contingencies of the research process. Even when geographers have given priority to neglected scales, spaces and actors of globalization,

they have tended to favor relatively short-term fieldwork involving formal interviews and content analysis of textual and visual media – falling short of ethnographic methods geared toward documenting the *practice* of cultural production. In general, Geography departments lack an institutional culture that values, even tolerates, long-term ethnographic research through which it is possible to explore how ‘households’, ‘markets’, ‘gender’ and other often taken-for-granted institutions and ideologies are themselves culturally constructed. This kind of insight is crucial for understanding how globalization processes become embedded *culturally* and are in turn shaped by local cultural economies.

V Articulation: synthesis

I argue here for an approach to the study of globalization that synthesizes the strengths of Anthropology and Geography in a manner that also remedies the deficiencies of each. In particular I advocate joining an ethnographic approach to exploring the politics of culture in peripheral places, with the multiscalar and normative commitments developed within Geography. To be sure, the very fact of increased economic and cultural integration entailed in globalization has prompted considerable erosion of disciplinary boundaries, as anthropologists recognize the spatiality of culture and geographers explore the social embeddedness of markets, institutions and governments. Yet within the institutional cultures of academia itself, segregation prevails at the most crucial junctures of disciplinary reproduction – in hiring and promotion decisions, for example, or in the norms surrounding what constitutes good research method. To the extent that there has been cross-fertilization in the individual practices of anthropologists and geographers, there has not been adequate accounting of where the opportunities and pitfalls lie. Thus the objective here in clarifying the benefits of interdisciplinary exchange is not to identify the ‘essential core’ of two extraordinarily diverse and contested fields, but rather to encourage a synthesis that moves beyond (not replicates) the limitations of each and to justify disciplinary integration at the scale of academic institutions (not just the publishing practices of individual scholars).

The first point of convergence could build on the injunction from Anthropology to understand how globalizing processes exist in the context of the realities of particular societies – with their historically specific cultures and ways of life (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002). Globalization studies must encompass an understanding of how macroeconomic processes and transnational cultural flows articulate with historically specific cultures and ways of life at the local scale. For however much more powerful other scales of influence and action may be, it is at the local scale that globalization is anchored, subsidized and transformed in the individual consumption and production practices necessary for its sustenance. Viewing the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ relationally in this way highlights how global capitalism and the international state system have been decisively shaped by so-called peripheral peoples – through the diverse ways they have interpreted what was happening to them, as much as through the way they in fact constitute the center by demarcating a zone of marginality. Thus, for example, Tanya Li (1999) illustrates how national development planners mobilize the category of ‘primitive people’ to define the center as ‘ordinary’. Sidney Mintz shows how the meaning of sugar for the lives of English people and its meaning for the British imperial

economy converged in the nineteenth century as a critical conjuncture in the development of global capitalism: English people began to see sugar as essential for living and supplying them with it became as much a political as an economic obligation (Mintz, 1986: 157). Mintz's study of cultural meanings corroborates other anthropological evidence that demand, fashion and taste are central to a cultural account of the origins of capitalism (e.g., Appadurai, 1986; Mukerji, 1983). It also poses a challenge to study the spread and intensification of global capitalism in terms of everyday practices and interpretations in local communities.

Second, globalization studies should explicitly consider the role and position of the periphery in globalizing processes. Too often theories of globalization are developed with exclusive reference to western experiences of state building and colonial expansion. For example, as Philip Kelly argues, the idea that globalization has entailed a 'hollowing out' of the nation state, an idea that circulates widely within Geography, is built on ethnocentric assumptions about the 'common experience of the emergence of the state in the nineteenth century and its zenith in the postwar Fordist regime of accumulation' (1999: 390). It ignores ongoing processes of postcolonial state building in the East and South. Were the latter to become part of the equation, a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the state and economic globalization might emerge, one that recognized that, '[w]hile some State functions . . . might be rendered more difficult to implement under globalization, others are in fact more effectively conducted' (Kelly, 1999: 390).

Cultural geographers and, increasingly, cultural anthropologists have argued that it is no longer necessary to conduct research in peripheral areas in order to see and understand difference (Gupta and Ferguson, 2002; Inda and Rosaldo, 2002). Indeed, the metropolitan centers of the west, which are also the centers of academic production, have themselves become sites of rich cross-cultural exchange, as important destinations in the diasporas of cultures and peoples. The possibilities of conducting cross-cultural research in the metropolitan centers of academia, notwithstanding, I believe Anthropology still offers an important rationale for travel away from metropolitan centers; for it is only by conducting research in peripheral areas that we can understand the implications of globalization for places that have less influence in the imperial balance of power. Sherry Ortner's comments about the limitations of narrowly political-economic approaches in Anthropology are relevant to illustrate this latter point (Ortner, 1984: 143):

History is often treated as something that arrives, like a ship, from outside the society in question. Political economists . . . tend to situate themselves more on the ship of (capitalist) history than on the shore. They say in effect that we can never know what the other system . . . really looked like anyway To such a position we can only respond: Try. The effort is as important as the results It is our [anthropologists'] capacity, largely developed in fieldwork, to take the perspective of the folks on the shore, that allows us to learn anything at all . . . beyond what we already know. Further, it is our location 'on the ground' that puts us in a position to see people not simply as passive reactors to . . . some 'system,' but as active agents and subjects of their own history.

With its emphasis on local agency, in other words, Anthropology pushes globalization studies to recognize the dialectical relationship between local and global scales of practice. While the articulation of local culture with macroeconomic processes is always ordered by asymmetrical power relations, it cannot be reduced merely to the exercise of power by the latter over the former; rather the joining of local and global produces an interplay of systems that reorders both, creating new social formations. As Jean

Comaroff argues, 'the relationship of a global system to a local formation must be viewed as a historical problem – inherently contradictory and unequal, and not universally determining' (Comaroff, 1985; cited in Pigg, 1990: 22).

Third, globalization studies can turn to Geography for tools to analyze the significance of place and scale in understanding the cultures and economies of globalization. Clearly, the context of globalization has made it impossible, at least unreasonable, to assume (as anthropologists are wont to do) an isomorphism between culture and place. Transnational patterns of migration, the circulation of certain commodities to the far corners of the globe, the ease with which television and the internet now transmit images around the world – all these forms of cultural flow weaken ties between culture and place. Drawing especially on the work of David Harvey, anthropologists have begun to recognize the importance of a 'spatial consciousness' for grappling with the contemporary movement of peoples, ideas and images. Thus Inda and Rosaldo (2002) and Gupta and Ferguson (2002) talk about the 'deterritorialization of culture' associated with the 'dislodging of cultural subjects and objects from particular or fixed locations in space and time' (Inda and Rodaldo, 2002: 11). At the same time, they have emphasized how culture has been 'reterritorialized' – how cultural forms and products, images and ideas, as much as human diasporas, are always reinscribed in specific cultural environments, however much they may travel the world. Thus culture continues to have a 'territorialized existence', but the placing of culture has grown increasingly unstable. Place still matters, but only in articulation with other scales of cultural and economic production – regional and national, as much as global.

Crucially, an emphasis on place and scale also challenges conventional models of articulation that rely on the notion of 'traditional', 'precapitalist', 'primitive' cultures that once existed autonomously but have now been violated by global capitalism. Traditional articulation models, however much they leave analytical space to explore the unintended consequences of interscalar connections, are analogous to discourses of cultural imperialism and homogenization in their treatment of culture as a fixed system of symbols and meanings that structure social life. The geographic intervention calls for historical explorations of the processes that go into place-making in the first instance; as Gupta and Ferguson put it, 'instead of assuming the autonomy of the primeval community, we need to examine how it was formed *as a community* out of the interconnected space that always already existed' (2002: 67). A historical approach to the construction of place foregrounds changes in the spatial distribution of hierarchical relations over time. It thus offers an antidote to the tendency in much of the critical literature on neoliberalism to essentialize, romanticize and indeed imagine the lingering existence of autonomous 'remote', 'non-capitalist' cultures that might offer guidelines for constructing an alternative to capitalism. In so doing, it guards against uncritical celebrations of 'local culture' by documenting systems of domination that operate within the periphery as much as across the core-periphery divide.

Finally, a synthesis of the contributions of Anthropology and Geography in the study of globalization could draw out the normative thrust implicit in anthropological theories of practice, to reflect the more explicit normative stance characteristic of Geography. Practice theory has provided anthropologists with the tools to highlight social differentiation and analyze how power operates through culture. It has offered a framework for distinguishing acquiescence from critical consciousness and for recognizing the political possibilities opened up in the present political-economic

conjuncture for those in subordinate social locations. Yet anthropologists have not conventionally taken practice theory to its logical (and intended) conclusion as a foundation for cultural critique and action. Here there is considerable scope to draw on the normative commitments expressed by geographers – for example, in the recent attempts to claim the global scale as a site not just for neoliberal hegemony but also for accountability to a global civil society. The call here for synthesis thus presents an opportunity to extend the concern with ‘practice’ into the more activist domain of ‘praxis’. In the domain of praxis, research itself becomes a form of practice with the injunction to make judgments, advocate change and empower informants to view their world critically.

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Notes

1. Omitted in particular is the subfield of ‘Applied Anthropology’, a post-second world war development (aptly reviewed in Gardner and Lewis, 1996), which has sought to link issues of indigenous rights and cultural difference to the practice and study of development (but which has also been sidelined in the dominant North American Anthropology departments).

2. No adequate terminology has been developed to characterize relations among countries with differing access to resources and power. Most have pejorative implications: developed/developing, first world/third world, core/periphery. Some have outlived their relevance, or the historical conditions of their emergence: first world/third world. More politically neutral geographic terminology – North/South, West/East – do not always accurately capture the global distribution of power and resources. Here I have settled on the terms ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ to capture relative positions within a fundamentally unsustainable and uneven capitalist world system.

3. I use the terms ‘practice anthropology’ and ‘anthropology of practice’ interchangeably. By ‘structural’ here I am encompassing not only the structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss (which posits that all societies manifest a ‘universal grammar of culture’ that sets the parameters for the range of possible social forms and practices) but also the semiotics of Clifford Geertz (which views culture as embodied in public symbols forming ‘webs of meaning’ or ‘psychological structures’ that guide individual action) and the cultural ecology of Marvin Harris (which interprets culture in Darwinian terms – as the rituals, symbols and values providing adaptive strategies that ensure cultural reproduction in a given environmental context). See Ortner (1984) for this classification.

4. While some scholars have argued that the salience of ‘hegemony’ as an analytical tool is limited to historical conditions of its emergence in cultural Marxism (see G. Smith, 1999: footnote), others have noted its relevance for any context where overt violence as a mode of domination enjoys no political or social legitimacy, and where ‘social practice is seen to depend on consent to certain dominant ideas which in fact express the needs of a dominant class’ (Williams, 1983: 145).

5. Ideology has assumed many different meanings within Marxian interpretations of culture (see Eagleton, 1991). Even among Gramscian scholars considerable disagreement persists about the parameters of ideological forms of power. While I find the Comaroffs’ interpretation particularly amenable to ethnographic research on the experience of domination, others have argued that it suffers from a naive understanding of ideology as self-conscious and ‘endlessly discussable’ (G. Smith, 1999).

6. Those participating in the 'reflexive turn' prompted by postmodern social theory have challenged the ability of anthropologists to authoritatively represent other cultures. They have agitated on the one hand for experiments in (and analysis of) ethnographic textual representations (to capture contingent and variable interpretations of the research process; Clifford, 1988) and on the other for shifting the sites of ethnographic research to North American and European contexts – to 'exoticize the West' (Marcus and Fischer 1999).

7. I am indebted to Lauren Leve for discussions about this genealogical thread in Anthropology.

8. Exceptions to this general observation can be found in the work of field-based geographers – such as Michael Watts, Gillian Hart, Judith Carney, Melissa Leach and Stuart Corbridge – whose interdisciplinary training and place-based field research illustrate the potential for an anthro-geography synthesis.

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